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Subject: A talk with Representative
of the Moscow Patriarchate
at the Ecumenical Council in Rome

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Very Rev. (Protoverey) Iveriy Voronov (address while in Rome: Hotel Castello, Piazza Adriana 12, tel.: 651 257), is docent of the Leningrad Theological Seminary. He is about 50, of medium height and slightly built. Knows only the Russian language well, but understands some German and Latin.

During the interview, in one of the Council's press rooms (he refused several times to meet in his hotel), another person was present - secretary of the Russian delegation to the Council, and also secretary of the Russian Orthodox delegation to the World Council of Churches in Geneva. The latter acted as ~~translators~~ interpreter, from Russian to Ukrainian, but only because he would not leave Voronov alone.

Voronov suggested that written questions be submitted for him to answer. He was given about 50 of them. They covered: general attitude towards the Council, Ukrainian churches, and the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union.

Vorónov did not attend the first two sessions of the Council, only the current one. He said he was impressed by the openness in which the Council Fathers express their ideas, which tend to differ. The things discussed at the council, he said, deal with problems involving not only Catholics, but other Christian and non-Christian, "all the people of good will."

The scheme on the Ecumenical movement in the world today is very well written, particularly because it avoids points on dogma, which are offensive to the other churches. Another positive aspect of the Council is its desire to establish peaceful dialog with the other Christian churches and with other ideological point of view. 74-124-29/3

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The secretary added that still another positive aspect of the Council is its involvement in the social needs of mankind.

Veronov stressed the need to continue maintaining the secret rite for Christian unity. This was the view of the Moscow Patriarchate. Russian Orthodox Church strived for unity among Christians, but not on the basis of a Pope as head of the universal church. The only head of this church is Christ the Lord. The Synod of Rhodes (not the last one, he said, but the previous one) urged the continuation of the old Catholics.

Voronov could not say very much about the Ukrainian church matters, because he never had direct contact with them. He said he knew absolutely nothing about any proposals in the Moscow Patriarchate or the Soviet government or the re-establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in western Ukraine. He said he had not heard, until now, of any attempts to establish a Ukr. Cath. Patriarchate. He knew nothing about ~~who~~ who was responsible for the release of Metropolitan Joseph Slipy, and only learned about the release from another bishop he was upper, at the time of the release. V. did say that he met Met. Slipy at the Council, and asked his blessing as a bishop.

As for the Ukr. Orthodox Church, V. said it is patterned after the Russian Orthodox Church. The head of the Ukr. Orth. Church is Metropolitan Iosaph (V. wasn't even sure of that, and at first said the man's name was Vasilii, but the secretary corrected him). Iosaph is also a permanent member of the Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The secretary then named some leading Ukrainians in the Russian Orthodox Church, such as Rev. Nekludov, who attended the first session of the Council, and who was permanent representative of the Bessarabian Triarchate in Geneva; to the Council of Ministers, and to the present Government; to the Bishop of Voronezh and Kursk; an important Ukrainian in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Greek Catholic Church of Armenia, and to those of all Christians in Austria.

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Voronov did not know why the Theological seminary in Kiev was closed down, probably because there were not enough students of theology. The number of such students is decreasing in the Soviet Union, as it is throughout the world, he said. But both men vehemently denied any accusations that the reasons could come from the Russian great power chauvinism. Such chauvinism does not exist, they said.

The two could not explain why there are so few seminaries in the USSR, with its 200,000 population. V. also did not know anything about the fate of the historic Ukrainian monastery at Kochayiv. Asked about the report that works there are being persecuted, and pilgrims are prevented from coming, the secretary replied that this is not true, because his wife was there recently.

Asked whether the Orthodox Church fights against the atheistic propaganda in the USSR, V. replied that his church does not fight anybody: this is in the Christian spirit of things. The Church fulfills its duties in the churches, where it spreads the word of Christ. The Church and State are separate, according to the Constitution of the USSR, and anyone is free to be either a ~~Christian~~ believer or an atheist. He said he attended schools as a young man, where he listened to the atheist propaganda, but later became a priest and a believer.

Soviet government is neutral towards religion and atheism, only the party, because of its ideology approves atheism, he said, but a believer may argue with an atheist propagandist. The secretary denied ~~that~~ the charge that ~~believers~~ believers are persecuted. V. distinguished between the two points of view on religion: that of an atheist and that of a believer, like himself, who believes that religion teaches the truth.

The Church in the USSR, according to the secretary, will take advantage of the present, and if it is necessary it will fit in with the local, national, and international interests. It will also come to the fourth session of the Council, unless, he said, something happens that will prevent our coming here.